

Board of Education Agenda Item

Item: K.

Date: June 22, 2005

Topic: First Review of a Recommendation from the Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure (ABTEL) to Establish a Cut-Score on the Virginia Reading Assessment, Effective July 1, 2006

Presenter: Dr. Thomas A. Elliott, Assistant Superintendent, Division of Teacher Education and Licensure and Mr. John Mattar, National Evaluation Systems, Inc.

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Origin:

☐ Topic presented for information only (no board action required)

☒ Board review required by
☐ State or federal law or regulation
☒ Board of Education regulation
☐ Other: _____

☐ Action requested at this meeting:

☒ Action requested at future meeting: July 27, 2005 (date)

Previous Review/Action:

☐ No previous board review/action

☒ Previous review/action
Date: April 29, 2003
Action: A Resolution to Enhance the Teaching of Reading in Virginia was adopted by the Board.
Date: June 23, 2004
Action: The Board of Education approved the exemption of early childhood special education teachers, speech-language pathologists and teachers of students with severe disabilities from the requirements of the Virginia Reading Assessment (VRA).

Background Information:

House Joint Resolution Number 794 (HJR 794), agreed to by the 2001 session of the Virginia General Assembly, requested the Department of Education, in cooperation with the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, to study the proficiency of Virginia teachers in teaching systematic explicit phonics. A series of initiatives by the Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure (ABTEL) and the Board of Education confirmed the need for consistent instruction in reading for persons aspiring to teach, as well as those already in

classrooms.

On April 29, 2003, the Board of Education adopted a Resolution to Enhance the Teaching of Reading in Virginia. One goal of the plan to implement that resolution was to develop a reading assessment aligned with the Virginia Standards of Learning and the National Reading Panel's five key components of effective reading instruction – phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension and fluency. That goal will be achieved through the requirement and administration of the Virginia Reading Assessment (VRA). Additionally, the test will help identify those teaching candidates who have the knowledge and skills that are important for performing the job of teaching reading as an elementary (prek-3 or prek-6) teacher or a special education teacher. Additionally, the test will determine the proficiency level of reading specialists seeking an endorsement to serve in Virginia public schools.

As a requirement of the Board of Education in adopting the resolution to enhance the teaching of reading and the development of a reading test, it was agreed that the period between July 1, 2004, to June 30, 2006, the Virginia Reading Assessment would be required of all candidates applying for initial licensure with endorsements in the areas of Early/Primary PreK-3, Elementary Education PreK-6, Special Education areas including Emotional Disturbances, Learning Disabilities, Mental Retardation, Hearing Impairments, Visual Impairments, and individuals seeking an endorsement as a Reading Specialist.

Summary of Major Elements

The Virginia Reading Assessment was developed by National Evaluation Systems (NES), Inc., in cooperation with Virginia educators and the Virginia Department of Education. The VRA program includes two tests: the Virginia Reading Assessment for Elementary and Special Education Teachers, and the Virginia Reading Assessment for Reading Specialists. The tests have been designed and developed to be fully aligned with the English Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools (SOL), the reading competencies contained in the *Virginia Licensure Regulations for School Personnel*, and with the National Reading Panel's five key components of effective reading instruction--phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency.

The Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure (ABTEL) received a validation and standard-setting report, *The Virginia Reading Assessment for Elementary and Special Education Teachers and the Virginia Reading Assessment for Reading Specialists* for discussion and action at its May 10, 2005, meeting. Copies of the validation and standard-setting report are available from the Division of Teacher Education and Licensure, Department of Education.

In addition, ABTEL received a presentation on the data contained in the report and discussed the recommended cut-score from the validation and standard-setting panel, the pass rate data collected by NES over the past year, the need for possible adjustments based on measurement error, and input received from Virginia educators serving on the Performance Standard-Setting Panel.

Using methods typically employed in large-scale testing, a raw score was calculated for each of the two sections of the test based on the individual item ratings. The raw score was converted to a scaled score of 100-300. The total test scaled score was determined by combining the two sections of scaled scores. Candidates' passing status is based on their total test scaled score.

After the presentation by NES, ABTEL referred the report to the Teacher Education Committee to develop a recommended cut-score for consideration by the full board. The Teacher Education Committee recommended that passing scores for the VRA be established as follows: 235 for elementary and special education teachers and 245 for reading specialists.

For the VRA for elementary and special education teachers, cut-scores from the two sections were combined for a total cut-score of 70. This score was converted to a scaled score of 235. Based on a recommended cut-score of 235, of the 1492 individuals who took the VRA through January 2005, 73 percent would pass at this level. For the VRA for reading specialists, cut-scores from the two sections were combined for a total cut-score of 78, representing a scaled score of 245. Based on a recommended cut-score of 245, of the 119 individuals who took the VRA through January 2005, 68 percent would pass at this level. The committee recommendation was adopted by the ABTEL.

Superintendent's Recommendation:

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board of Education receive for first review the Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure recommendation to establish cut-scores for the Virginia Reading Assessments for elementary and special education teachers at 235 and for reading specialists at 245, effective July 1, 2006.

Impact on Resources:

Costs associated with meeting the reading requirement for initial licensure will be the responsibility of the individual seeking a license.

Timetable for Further Review/Action:

Annually, the Board of Education will receive reports on the passing rates on the reading tests as a part of the education program review and approval regulations and the Title II reporting requirements.